

February 2, 2007

STENEHJEM JOINS NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO SPONSOR NINTH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONSUMER PROTECTION WEEK

BISMARCK – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem has joined a group of federal, state, and local government agencies and national consumer advocacy organizations to launch the ninth annual National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW), February 4-10, 2007. This year's campaign, "Read Up and Reach Out: Be an Informed Consumer," encourages consumers across the nation to take advantage of the wealth of information that can help people recognize a rip-off, smell a scam, or find a fraud.

As part of the Consumer Protection Week activities, Stenehjem's office is hosting the state finals of the annual LifeSmarts competition on Wednesday, February 7, 2007 at the Heritage Center. The competition, which teaches teens to be smart and responsible consumers, is open to the public.

Informed consumers are better able to see through frauds and deceptions, whether they take the form of questionable claims in an ad, 'breathless' offers that come in the mail or email, or schemes that sound like sure-fire successes.

"I am proud to be a part of this year's National Consumer Protection Week campaign," said Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem. "Consumers are our most effective partners in the effort to fight fraud. I encourage everyone to read up and reach out, learn how to deter fraud and deception in the marketplace – and tell others."

Parrell Grossman, director of the Consumer Protection division, encouraged consumers to review information about common scams, available on the Consumer Protection pages of the Attorney General's website, at www.ag.nd.gov. The division also issues a consumer newsletter, Too Good to Be True, which explains consumer rights and reviews current scams.

"Scams are everywhere, but particularly on the Internet, and consumers need to be alert," said Grossman. "From classified advertising to phony auction and banking emails, scam artists are using technology to steal from unsuspecting consumers."

Grossman said a good offense is the best defense, and offered the following tips to protect against online scams:

- Never respond to an e-mail that asks for confirmation of bank account, credit card, or personal information - even if it looks official or threatens to freeze the account. It's a trick – the phony website sends any information that is entered directly to the scam artist, who will use it steal from the account.
- Classified scams often involve an offer to pay significantly more than the asking price, if the seller will wire the extra funds to a third party. Although the reasons for asking vary and the certified check looks real enough, the scam is

always the same: the check is counterfeit and the seller is out both the money that was wired on and the amount of the fake certified check.

- Foreign lotteries are always a scam. Always. So is any e-mail that claims the recipient has won a prize but must first pay taxes or other fees before the winnings can be released.

For more information about consumer scams, visit:
<http://www.ag.nd.gov/CPAT/ConsumerInfo.htm> or contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection division at (701) 328-3404 or toll-free at 800 472-2600.